the matter of development and operation of postal services in the country. The salient features of the policy of the department are indicated below :

In the matter of expansion of postal network in the rural areas, the department's policy provides for substantial subsidy in respect of new post offices - 66% of anticipated cost in normal rural area and 85% of the anticipated cost in hilly, tribal and inaccessible area as well as allowes the maximum permissible annual loss to the extent of Rs 2400/- in normal rural area and Rs.4800/- in tribal and hilly areas in the matter of upgradation of rural Branch Post Office into a Departmental Sub Post Office. 8041 villages including Gram Panchayats in the country, where opening of a post office is justified according to population and distance parameters are still without postal counter facilities and the focus of department's policy now is to provide new post offices in these villages. In extending postal facilities in the urban area financial viability is given greater importance in the department's policy and a newly opened post office is required to be self-supporting by the end of its first year of existence. Parameter in respect of distance from existing post office is also appropriately related to urban conditions where the density of population is much higher than in the rural area.

As regards delivery service in rural area, the norm is to deliver articles from Branch Post Office on the same day when these are received unless there are constraints of transmission arangements. In the urban area, all departmental delivery office provide atleast one delivery per day for both ordinary and accountable articles, which are supplemented by more than one delivery in a large number of urban post offices, having regard to the volume of articles and the time of their receipt.

In the matter of all mail transmission, the department's policy is to gradually introduce automated systems in the large nodal centres for speedy and effective mail processing. The first step in this direction has been taken with the setting up of the automated mail processing centres at Mumbai and Chennai respectively.

The department is also pursing the policy of optimising the benefits of the post office as an outlet of social distribution system by performing a variety of agency functions like small savings schemes of the Government, payment of pension for Railway Pensioners and Coal Miners, as also operation of the Postal Life Insurance Organisation.

The department's policy of modernising the postal service lays emphasis on counter services where application of computer-based technology is aimed at achieving greater costomer satisfaction through more efficient and responsive counter service and enhancing employee motivation through improved work-environment. Provision of new value-added services for the business/professional segment of costomers is also in focus for optimising the upgraded retailing capacity of modernised postal counters. Computer based technologies are also being introduced in other areas of activity like financial services, PLI, inventory control and speed post Service.

The department's policy of modernisation through induction of new technology is being achieved on the basis of an extensive training programme aimed at upgrading the skills of its employees.

The department is also seeking to segment its areas of activities catering for business and commercial sector and those for meeting universal service obligation with a view to improving quality of service and generation of revenue.

[English]

Sliding of Sales and Profit in Steel Sector

3050. SHRI SYDAIAH KOTA :
SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO :

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that sales and profit of steel sector have been sliding;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the targets fixed by the Government for earning profit from the public sector steel plants during 1996-97;

(d) the actual profit earned by each of the steel plants during the said period;

(e) whether the steel plant under SAIL has not earned profit as it was expected at the begining of the year; and

(f) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) and (b) Among the main steel producers, 'sales' and 'profits before tax' of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and Tata Iron & Steel Company Limited (TISCO) have been steadily increasing for the last three years. As regards Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd. (RINL), the 'sales' have been increasing and the losses incurred by it have been decreasing for the last three years.

(c) Target of Profit in SAIL, for the year 1996-97, is Rs. 825 crores. While the net loss in RINL, for the year 1996-97 is targeted to be brought down to Rs. 272.69 crores.

(d) The actual profit earned by the steel plants during 1996-97 will be known only after the close of the current financial year.

(e) and (f) Do not arise in view of (d) above.

Facilities to Passengers at Chunar Railway Station

3051. SHRI S. P. JAISWAL : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received